

Message Text

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SUBJ: PRESS REACTION TO RENEWAL OF COLOMBIAN-CUBAN RELATIONS

1. SUMMARY. FOLLOWING FOREIGN MIN LIEVANO'S FEB 28 ANNOUNCEMENT THAT COLOMBIA INTENDED TO RENEW DIP RELATIONS WITH CUBA, THE NATION'S PRESS GAVE ALMOST DAILY NEWS COVERAGE TO THE PROCESS THAT LED TO THE RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS ON MARCH 6. ON MARCH 7 AND 8 A NUMBER OF DAILY NEWSPAPERS PROVIDED EDITORIAL COMMENT ON THE EVENT, THE LIBERAL AND INDEPENDENT PRESS PREDICTABLY SUPPORTING THE MOVE AND CONSERVATIVE NEWSPAPERS OBJECTING. OPINION IN FAVOR EMPHASIZED THE BELIEF THAT CUBA AND THE WORLD CONTEXT HAVE CHANGED SUFFICIENTLY TO MAKE RENEWAL OF RELATIONS APPROPRIATE AT THIS TIME AND THAT THE MOVE IS CONSISTENT WITH COLOMBIA'S PLURALISM IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. THE MINORITY CONSERVATIVE VIEW CITED AS GROUNDS FOR ITS OPPOSITION COLOMBIA'S CIRCUMVENTION OF ITS COMMITMENTS TO THE OAS AND THE DANGER OF CUBAN-SUPPORTED SUBVERSION. END SUMMARY.

2. IN WP EDITORIAL ENTITLED "RELATIONS WITH CUBA", BOGOTA'S LIBERAL EL TIEMPO SET THE MOOD FOR ITS RESERVED SUPPORT FOR

RECOGNITION BY STATING, " CERTAINLY WE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED THAT THE RESUMPTION BE CARRIED OUT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE OAS, BUT RECONCILED TO ITS BILATERAL NATURE, WE ACCEPT IT AS A PRAISEWORTHY AND ALREADY DEFINITE FACT." AS REASONS FOR ITS SUPPORT, EL TIEMPO MAINTAINED THAT"...THE REGIME OF FIDEL CASTRO HAS CHANGED ITS CONDUCT AND ATTITUDE, CONVINCED THAT IT CAN GAIN NOTHING BY UNCLASSIFIED

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STIMULATING WILD SUBVERSIVE MOVEMENTS..." THEN LINKING RECOG-

NITION TO THE LARGER HEMISPHERIC PICTURE, EL TIEMPO COMMENTED THAT SANCTIONS IMPOSED AGAINST CUBA WERE REASONABLE DURING AN EARLIER PERIOD, BUT TODAY THE AMERICAN STATES ARE ON A DIFFERENT "ROUTE" AND "THE MAINTENANCE OF THE SANCTIONS AGAINST CUBA WOULD THEREFORE BE CONTRARY TO THE REALITY OF NEW FACTS, AND THEIR PROLONGATION WOULD SIGNIFY THE UNDUE EXTENSION OF THE EARMARKS OF THE COLD WAR, WHICH HAVE ALREADY LOST THEIR EFFECT IN OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD." MOREOVER, ACCORDING TO EL TIEMPO, THE RECOGNITION OF CUBA"...IS IN LINE WITH THE THESIS OF UNIVERSALIZATION OF FOREIGN RELATIONS AND IDEOLOGICAL PLURALISM" OF THE GOVERNMENT OF COLOMBIA.

3. THE LIBERAL EL ESPECTADOR, IN AN EVEN FIRMER STATEMENT OF SUPPORT, SAYS, "THE PRINCIPAL REASON FOR THIS DIPLOMATIC TURN LIES IN THE CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH OCCASIONED THE RUPTURE IN 1961." ECHOING EL TIEMPO, THE EDITORIAL POINTS OUT THAT "...THE PRINCIPLE OF 'UNIVERSALIZATION' OF OUR FOREIGN RELATIONS, OR OF 'PLURALISM', WHICH PERMITS DIALOGUE AND UNDERSTANDING WITH REGIMES OF ALL IDEOLOGIES, IS OPERATIVE." "OUR ACTIVE POLICY TOWARDS THE NATIONS OF THE CARIBBEAN WOULD BE INCOMPLETE...IF CUBA DID NOT FIGURE IN IT." HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO EL ESPECTADOR, "...THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS WITH CUBA...DOES NOT IMPLY CHANGES OF ANY OTHER NATURE IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OF COLOMBIA" AND "OUR GOVERNMENT...WILL CONTINUE SEEKING THE INDISPENSABLE COLLABORATION BETWEEN ALL THBINATIONS OF THE HEMISPHERE... WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK AND THE NORMS OF THE (OAS).

4. IN A BRIEF EDITORIAL, EL HERALDO OF BARRANQUILLA, ALSO A LIBERAL NEWSPAPER, REITERATED THE PRINCIPLE OF PLURALISM BY STATING, "...IF COLOMBIA HAS RELATIONS WITH THE AUGUSTO PINOCHET REGIME OF THE EXTREME RIGHT, THERE IS NO REASON FOR NOT HAVING THEM ALSO WITH THE FIDEL CASTRO REGIME OF THE EXTREME LEFT." EL PAIS OF CALI, REFLECTING ITS CONSERVATIVE BIAS, WOULD HAVE PREFERRED THAT THE CHANGE IN COLOMBIA'S POLICY TOWARD CUBA HAD BEEN MADE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE OAS. HOWEVER, IT THEN STRAYS FROM THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY LINE AND SAYS, "NOW, IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT NUMEROUS OBSTACLES HAVE BEEN OVERCOME (NOT CLARIFIED) AND THINGS ARE SEEN FROM A MORE POLITICALLY REALISTIC POINT OF VIEW CORRESPONDING TO AN ERA CHARACTERIZED BY THE PLURALISM OF SYSTEMS AND INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE, OUR COUNTRY, FOLLOWING THE UNCLASSIFIED

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EXAMPLE OF OTHER LATIN AMERICANS, IS PUTTING AN END TO THE ISOLATION AND IS CREATING A NEW BREACH IN THE HEMISPHERIC BLOCKADE IMPOSED ON CASTRO MORE THAN A DECADE AGO."

5. BOGOTA'S CONSERVATIVE EL SIGLO AND LA REPUBLICA DISAPPROVE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S NEW DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVE. EL SIGLO, IN EDITORIAL HEADED "AN ACCOMPLISHED FACT", RECOGNIZES THE PRESIDENT'S CONSTITUTIONAL LICENSE TO CARRY OUT FOREIGN POLICY AS HE SEES

BEST, BUT THE PAPER CANNOT "...COMPREHEND THE SUBTLE REASONS WHICH JUSTIFY"...THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT...THIYL(RECOGNITION OF CUBA) WILL PERMIT THE STRENGTHENING OF THE OAS..." EL SIGLO BELIEVES THAT THE GOVERNMENT ACZMD IN VIOLATION OF ARTICLE 20 OF THE OAS CHARTER IN VIEW OF THE RESULTS OF THE RECENT QUITO MEETING. THE NEWSPAPER ALSO REMINDS READERS OF CASTRO'S REPUTATION FOR SUPPORTING GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES AND POINTS OUT THAT "...THERE REMAINS THE CERTAIN DANGER OF THE USE OF THE (CUBAN) EMBASSY FOR THE PURPOSE OF STIMULATING 'SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES OR DISRUPTIONS OF THE PEACE AND TRANQUILITY OF THE NATION'..." AN EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTOR TO LA REPUBLICA IS YET MORE HARSH IN HIS EXCEPTION TO RECOGNITION OF CASTRO'S CUBA, RECOUNTING THE REGIME'S REPUTATION FOR REPRESSION AND CLAIMING THAT "...NO COUNTRY OF AMERICA HAS ANYTHING TO GAIN BY ESTABLISHING RELATIONS WITH THE CASTRO GOVERNMENT..." HE WARNS THAT "...ALL OF (CUBA'S) EMBASSIES, WITH HYPOCRITIC SMILES, ARE NOTHING BUT TREACHEROUS AND DECEITFUL CENTERS FOR THE FOMENTING OF VIOLENCE AND MARXIST TYRANNY, DISTILLING THE CONSERVATIVE VIEW, THE CONTRIBUTOR WRITES, "...THE GOVERNMENT OF CASTRO HAS BEEN AND CONTINUES TO BE CLOSED TO LIBERTY AND FREQUENTLY A HUGE EXECUTION WALL."

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